

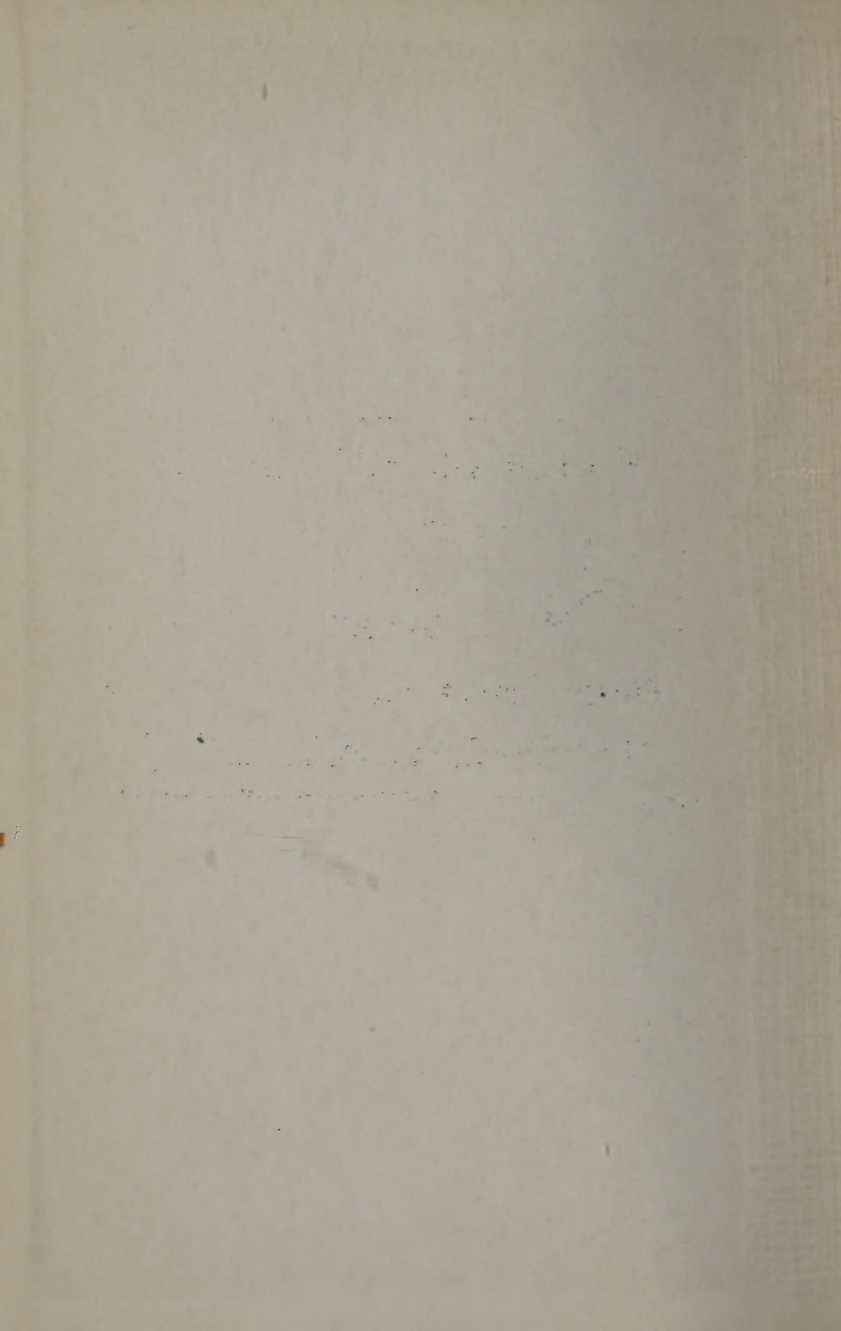
A · MASQUE · OF · SIBYLS

☆ ☆ ☆ BY ☆ ☆ ☆

FLORENCE · CONVERSE

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A MASQUE OF SIBYLS

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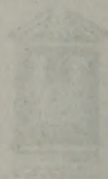
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BOSTON

1910

A MASQUE OF SIBYLS

BY
HORACE COVINGTON



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TO MY MOTHER

APOLOGIA

AMONG the several patient friends of mine who, during the past two years, could not choose but hear the cumulating verses of this masque, there have been certain classicists and certain pagans—note that the terms are not mutually inclusive—who have not listened “like a three years’ child,” but have tempered their expressions of approval with question and protest concerning a conception of character and details of literary form which seem to them a departure from accepted tradition. Possibly they are.

But tradition is silent as to the literary form in which the Cumæan Sibyl told, if she ever did tell, her tale of Tarquin. That it was not in the old English ballad form, crystallized for us in the fifteenth century, I grant; but neither was it in English blank verse of the sixteenth, nor in the spirited metres of Lord Macaulay. And even if we knew whether she haggled with the King in colonial Greek or in the Latin vernacular of the fifth century B.C., of what avail to know, since for

us she must speak in English? Form is the interpreter of spirit, or should be, and the spirit of the Sibyl's story is the spirit of the old wives' tales, whose best interpreter is the ballad. Moreover, at the edge of eternity, where time itself is anachronistic, I can as easily hear the Sibyl of Cumæ saying *Gramerci*, or *Tilly vally*, as *Mehercle* or *ὁτοτοτοῖ, πῶτοι*, or their Esperantic equivalent. And if Tarquin did not swear by Peter's dome, yet to make him does not detract from the validity of the tale; and it does assist the rhyme,—always an important consideration among ballad-makers.

Of the historical, or better the archæological, accuracy of my conception of the Sibyl, there has been no question; but lest there be some among my readers who, having small Latin and less Greek and no archæology, distrust the Sibyl's ravings and are inclined to regard her Roman claims as more dramatic than truthful, let me here gratefully acknowledge my debt to that valuable contribution to history, "The Religion of Numa," by Mr Jesse Benedict Carter, the head of the American School at Rome. But it is my treatment of Apollo to which my pagan friends object. They do not question, they protest; it is an affair of the emotions with them, not of the intellect. And

I would be tender—as tender as the literary exigencies of the situation will permit—for do we not all grieve when we wound the religious sensibilities of our friends? But I am at a loss to know how, in a poem whose theme is the triumph of the New Jerusalem, I could conceive of Apollo as other than a false god. In a city which no more needs the sun he will quite obviously be *de trop*. For a people whose vision of perfection is embodied in Christ Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead, he must inevitably fall short. It is true, my conception of Apollo is not the classic conception, but it rests on tradition notwithstanding. It derives from the old mediæval attitude which placed Apollo and his kindred among the evil spirits, the tempters of humanity. The baffled Eros of the claw feet and bat-like wings in Giotto's fresco of St Francis and Lady Poverty at Assisi, witnesses to this mediæval point of view, and justifies me in picturing my Apollo in the autumnal scarlet of dying fires. No; the difficulty for my pagan friends lies not in my treatment of Apollo but in my choice of theme. And I could understand the feelings of an unlettered pagan—if such there be to-day—in this regard; but why literary pagans should object to my choosing to celebrate the Apocalypse—except,

of course, on the ground of my incapacity—any more than I, a literary Christian, object to Shelley's celebrating the myth of Prometheus, I fail to comprehend, since "I do not like thee, Dr Fell," cannot be called the critic's motto.

Concerning Emmanuela there is less to say. If she is, as I suspect, more of an abstraction than an individual, if she seems less human than the old Sibyl, I can but plead that although of the evil that is past we have an intimate and personal experience, of the good that shall be we know little beyond our hopeful generalizations. We believe that the Sibyl of the new order will be indifferent to worldly glories, immune to personal temptations, whether of the senses or the spirit; and that if she can be tempted it will be through her love of the brethren; for the rest, she is a mystery.

The children explain themselves, I hope. But for the sake of the literalist who may not understand my choice of the three races, I will say that in seeming to limit the children of the Kingdom to Greeks, Italians, and Goths, I am very far from intending to imply that the golden children of the Orient, the dusky descendants of Ham, or any others of the races of man, will be excluded from that mystical one hundred and forty and four

thousand beheld of John. The Greeks, Italians, and Goths, were chosen because they were the races which Cumæ knew. And three races are as adequate as three hundred, for a parable.

FLORENCE CONVERSE.

Boston, 1909.



THE PERSONS OF THE MASQUE

EMMANUELA, a young prophetess whom the children call NELLINA.

THE CUMÆAN SIBYL, whom the children call GRANNIE.

APOLLO, whom the children call THE HARPER.

THE GREEK CHILDREN—

ION, who may one day be a philosopher.

SPYRIDION, a little athlete who asks only to bear burdens.

AESKLEPIOS, a lame boy, endowed with gifts of healing.

AGLAIA, who invents beautiful patterns.

THE ITALIAN CHILDREN—

VITTORINO, who has a sword and is therefore a peacemaker.

FELICE, a little merchant who does not ask a price.

GIUSTINIANO, who goes by the Book.

CORNELIA, who plays house and has three dolls.

MAFALDA, who loves "every meanest flower that blows."

THE GOTHIC CHILDREN—

THEODORIC, a little sea-rover with a missionary spirit.

HEREWARD, who sings songs.

BRUNHILDA, who makes riddles and asks many questions.

THE TIME OF THE MASQUE.

*At the edge of Eternity : from mid-afternoon to sunset
of a day in spring.*

THE SETTING FOR THE MASQUE

IN the region once called CUMÆ: A level place strown with the ruins of the TEMPLE OF APOLLO, on the heights immediately beneath the ACROPOLIS and overlooking the sea. The CAVE OF THE SIBYL, in the side of the steep hill whose summit is crowned by the ACROPOLIS, opens upon this level place. The clumsy, wooden door, once so useful in protecting the interior of the CAVE, now hangs upon one leathern hinge and is propped back against the cliff-side with a lump of sculptured stone. In the mouth of the CAVE dry leaves dance intermittently in a fitful whirlwind. The SIBYL sits outside in the sun and nods, and sometimes mutters to herself, and sometimes lifts her withered hands in vague, palsied gesticulation. She is very old. CHILDREN are playing among the ruins of the TEMPLE OF APOLLO. They have cleared a square place and are building a wall about it, of broken bits of stone and coloured marbles. The little AGLAIA is making a bright pattern in the wall as she builds. ION, VITTORINO, AESKLEPIOS, and HEReward have left their own work and are

watching AGLAIA. GIUSTINIANO, *with a tall green reed in his hand, paces off the four sides of the clearing ; sometimes he kneels and lays the reed along the ground, and measures carefully ; he is absorbed in his work. A little way up the hill, among the littered ruins, SPYRIDION is tugging and pushing at the great carved capital of a pillar ; he is very hot and red and happy. In a shady place, not far from where SPYRIDION sweats at his toil, CORNELIA has found a flat stone, and she is arranging bread upon it, and raisins, and cheese, which she takes out of a little basket and lays upon vine leaves, daintily. Her three dolls sit propped up in a row against a fallen column : a small ampulla stands upright beside them, wedged between three rocks. Presently, after the MASQUE is begun and the other CHILDREN are talking, CORNELIA tilts the ampulla, pours water from it into a little carved wooden cup, and climbing cautiously to SPYRIDION, gives him to drink. THEODORIC sits by himself high up on a jutting boulder where he can look out over the sea ; he is whittling a little boat, but for the most part he sits with his chin in his hand, and his eyes a long way off, dreaming. Below, on the level place and between the little clearing and the SIBYL'S CAVE, FELICE has got together a heap of stones and rocks and polished marbles, little and big ; he and BRUN-*

HILDA are sorting out these stones by colours and by carvings. MAFALDA, a very little girl, is straying about, caressing the spring flowers that blossom among the chinks of the broken walls and wreath around the fallen pillars; especially does she hover around a little bush of yellow flowers that grows in the middle of the clearing. Above, on the hillside, the columns of the unroofed temples of the ACROPOLIS climb against the sky. Far off at the horizon the sea shimmers. HERWARD is singing in a low, chanting voice as he watches AGLAIA.

HERE. Eyes that see, eyes that see!

Lo, the vision of Eternity!

Lo, the mystery!

The lovely lady like a bride,

In wedding garments and a crown,

Out of heaven coming down,

In earth to bide.

Lo, the trailing of her gown!

Ears that hear, ears that hear!

Hark!—the morning stars!—and hark, the
clear

Call of sphere to sphere!

And list the homely, happy sound

The desert makes, a-blossoming!

A MASQUE OF SIBYLS

Could we dream the wastes would sing?
 The barren ground?
 Hear!—the message of the King!

Dreaming heart, dreaming heart!
 Prove thyself! Reveal how wise thou art!
 Choose the better part!
 The city gates are open wide;
 Come in, ye citizens, ye free!
 Taste the twelve fruits of the tree,
 And kiss the Bride!
 Take the cross and follow me!

AGL. (*calling out as she steps back to survey her pattern in the wall*).

Who has a little white, smooth stone for me?
 Oh, very, very round, and not too large,
 And not the white that's blue, but golden white,
 And polished,—

HERE. (*eagerly*). Yes; the kind we play are pearls!

VITT. Oh, if Aglaia were not here to help,
 How, ever, should we build our city wall!

AGL. We shall not build it now, without the pearl,
 Dear Vittorino.

ION. (*dreamily*). If there were no pebbles
 To build into a wall, no earth to build on,
 Only the pattern in Aglaia's mind,

Only our dream, could we yet build the wall?

HERE. (*in a rapture of exultation*).

I could!

AGL. (*with assurance*). And so could I!

AESK. (*doubtfully*). And even I;

My spirit is not lame, Nellina says.

VITT. (*holding up his right forefinger wrapped in a rag, and shaking it merrily at AESKLEPIOS*).

This is my finger, named Aesklepios,

That thou didst kiss and bind, to make it well;

Now, every little stone the finger lifts,

It is Aesklepios who lifts the stone.

ION. (*consolingly*).

And after all, we know we only play.

If we were building up the real true wall,—

AGL. (*nodding*).

The one whose pattern whispers in my mind!

HERE. (*nodding*).

The one Nellina reads of in the Book,—

ION. Yes; that one,—

VITT. But I thought Nellina said

We are?

ION. We are; but listen, Vittorino:

The truly wall,—ah, how shall I explain it?

Where is Nellina?—she—

HERE. I understand!

AGL. And I!

AESK. I think I do.

VITT. Then so will I.

But may we not still play this is the wall?

HERE. It is! it is! and red stones are the rubies,
And green ones emeralds, and this dear blue
Is turquoise.

AGL. But we have not found my pearl.

VITT. (*calling out noisily*).

A pearl! a pearl! Has anyone a pearl?

FEL. (*calling back in triumph from where he stands
beside his little orderly heaps of stones*).

I, I!—Not one, but all these many pearls!

I found them all. Brunhilda found a few.

We do not sell them; no; the richest man
Might give me all he had, he could not buy
These pearls; they're very precious.

CHILDREN (*running to him and protesting and coax-
ing*). Oh, Felice!

SIBYL (*disturbed by the clamour, she totters to her
feet, crying*).

My price!—My price!—O Tarquin!

[*She toddles shakily to the mouth of the
CAVE, gathers a handful of leaves,
tears them in feeble frenzy, and casts
them up into the air, scattering them.
SPYRIDION, on the hillside, pauses a
moment in his tugging, looks down on*

his noisy playmates, wrings the sweat from his brow, and goes back to his task. GIUSTINIANO glances up from his measuring, and presently follows the other CHILDREN and stands beside them, listening and observing, his reed in his hand, while they plead with FELICE. The wild look in the SIBYL's eyes fades to vacancy, she settles down on her haunches at the mouth of the CAVE, and falls into a doze.

AGL. (*earnestly*). But I need it!

I need the pearl, Felice!

VITT. (*putting an arm around FELICE's shoulder*).

One, one only.

ION. (*in grave remonstrance*).

Canst thou be happy with a heap of stones,
That neither smile, nor speak to thee, nor love thee?

AESK. (*taking FELICE's hand*).

Think how Aglaia's pattern must go lame!

HERE. Think of the wall, Felice, not of us;

Not of thyself,—oh, think not of thyself!

FEL. (*who has been standing in front of the heap of white stones, his hands outspread to protect it, a teasing smile on his face*).

I will not sell the pearls, I will not sell

One pearl of all these pearls,—and why? And why?

[*He begins to dance up and down.*

I'll rather give them!

CHILDREN (*flinging themselves upon FELICE with shouting and laughter*).

Naughty!—Oh, Felice!

FEL. (*extricating himself joyful but breathless*).

Come choose! Come choose! The best: the
pearl of pearls!

Brunhilda knows my jewels; she shall choose.

She knows the name of every precious stone.

This one is chrysolite, Brunhilda says,

This chrysoprase,—

AGL. Yes; let Brunhilda choose!

[BRUNHILDA *stoops over the heap of white stones and the CHILDREN squat around her in a ring, eagerly watching.*

BRUN. (*lifting her head*).

And shall I say a riddle? Shall I say

A rune of riches while I choose the pearl?

ION. Yes, yes, Brunhilda!

HERE. Yes; I love thy riddles.

[*With face uplifted, eyes tight shut, and little hands groping among the white stones, BRUNHILDA chants her RUNE OF RICHES.*

BRUN. I have a golden ball,
A big, bright, shining one,

Pure gold ; and it is all
Mine.—It is the sun.

I have a silver ball,
A white and glistening stone
That other people call
The moon ;—my very own !

The jewel things that prick
My cushion's soft blue cover
Are mine,—my stars, thick, thick,
Scattered the sky all over.

And everything that's mine
Is yours, and yours, and yours,—
The shimmer and the shine !—
Let's lock our wealth out-doors !

[BRUNHILDA *recites the first three stanzas of her RUNE very slowly, but at the fourth she stands erect, opens her eyes, and holds up the chosen pearl in one hand, pointing with the other to the CHILDREN, who jump to their feet, laughing and capering, and embracing one another. GIUSTINIANO, who has all this while stood outside the little group, also receives embraces.*

ION. } (*dancing and chanting*).

AESK. } And everything that's mine,

VITT. } Is yours, and yours, and yours !

HERE. } And everything that's mine,

FEL. } Is yours, is yours, and yours !

[*While the other CHILDREN are capering,
AGLAIA runs to BRUNHILDA and puts
both arms around her ; the two little
girls kiss each other.*

VITT. (*flourishing his little wooden sword*).

Felice!—thou art King of our new city!

The richest must be King !

AESK. The one who gives
Everything to the Kingdom—he's the King.

GIUS. (*interrupting*).

This pearl, Aglaia ; where—?

FEL. No, no ! Not I !

A King must sit upon the throne all day.

GIUS. (*ignoring FELICE*).

The pearls are for the gates ; I saw it written
Within the Book Nellina reads to us.

I saw it written that the gates are pearls.

AGL. (*in a gentle tone of protest*).

Yet is the wall adorned with precious stones ;
Nellina read it.

HERE. Yes ; she read—adorned.

FEL. Kings may not gather precious stones, but I

Must gather them.

[*The CHILDREN are no longer attending to FELICE. They have gathered around GIUSTINIANO, anxiously.*

GIUS. (*gravely counting on his fingers*).

The first foundation jasper,
Sapphire the second, third chalcedony,
Emerald fourth, the fifth a sardonyx,
Sixth sardius, and seventh chrysolite.
Beryl and topaz are the eighth and ninth,
The tenth is chrysoprase, eleventh jacinth,
And amethyst the last; for there are twelve
Foundations in our wall,—But where's a pearl?

AGL. (*crestfallen*).

Nellina loves the pattern. When I said
“I'll make a garland here between the beryl
And chrysolite,” Nellina said, “Do, sweetheart!”

VITT. (*coaxingly*).

It is not written there shall be no wreath
Around the wall.

GIUS. (*still in doubt*).

But if we need the pearls
For gates?—Twelve gates!—And every gate a
pearl!

FEL. I promise pearls! Oh, do not make me King!

AGL. (*turning lovingly to GIUSTINIANO*).

No, no! Thou shalt be King, dear Giustiniano,

For Kings are wise.

GIUS. (*humbly*). But I'm not wise, I'm foolish,
I'm stupid. See!—I cannot understand
The meaning of the Book. If I should spoil
Our city wall? Oh, shame upon the King!
Crown Ion; he is wise.

ION. How wise am I?
Ask me what wisdom is,—I cannot tell,
Aesklepios is a truer King than I.
Kings should be comforters. We always run
To dear Aesklepios when we pinch our fingers.

AESK. Kings must be brave. They keep the city
gates

Against the enemy,—all day,—all night.

GIUS. (*correcting him*).

There shall be no night there, Nellina said.

AESK. (*assenting*).

No; and the twelve pearl gates are never shut.

Ah, watchful must he be, and very brave!

HERE. I know his name!—His name is Vittorino!

CHILDREN (*taking hands in a ring and dancing
round VITTORINO*).

His name is Vittorino!

GIUS. Crown him!

CHILDREN (*dancing madly*). Crown him!

[SPYRIDION and CORNELIA come hurrying
down the hill. The SIBYL, roused,

gets to her feet, draws near, and stands watching and smiling in bewilderment, her hands on her hips.

VITT. (*shaking his head, and lifting hands and voice to still the clamour*).

But hear me! how shall I, if I am King,
Fight for the King?

HERE. (*musings*). No; that would be too strange.

FEL. (*perplexed*). No, for one's self one never fights.

OTHER CHILDREN (*shocked*). Oh, no!

SIBYL (*touching AESKLEPIOS to attract his attention, and pointing first to the wall and then to VITTORINO*).

And is it Rome?—And is it Romulus,
That slew his brother?

[*The CHILDREN cluster round the SIBYL and AESKLEPIOS.*

HERE. Did she speak of Rome?

BRUN. How old she must be to remember Rome?

GIUS. Grannie, how did they choose their Kings
in Rome?

AESK. No, no; don't ask her!

CHILDREN (*astonished*). Why?

AESK. (*with agitation*). Nellina said—

The Book said,—that first Earth is past away,
And death shall be no more, nor pain, nor crying.

CHILDREN (*bewildered*).

But pain?—But Kings?

ION (*putting his arm tenderly around Aesklepios*).
 We are not Rome, thou meanest?

We are the Holy City coming down
 From God?

AESK. Yes; out of heaven,—

HERE. Like a Bride!

AESK. And all those old first things are passed away,
 And earth, and we, are new.

GIUS. But in the Book
 Is written, He that sitteth on the throne,
 He is the one that maketh all things new.

ION. Ah, who is he shall sit upon the throne?

[*The SIBYL has been standing in their midst, smiling to herself, her mind far away from their concerns; but ION's exclamation rouses her. She makes answer suddenly in a loud, hoarse voice.*

SIBYL. He that is greatest!

[*The CHILDREN look at one another and laugh.*

ION. May one ever know.

BRUN. The teasing Harper says 'tis he is King
 Of all this country.

VITT. (*passionately*). Not the Harper!—No!

HERE. Nellina will not make him King!

CHILDREN. No, no!

GIUS. Nellina read it in the Book : the greatest
Is he that serves.

COR. Spyridion is a servant.

SPYR. No more than thou ; no more than Giustiniano.
I sweat more ;—but I only fetch and carry.
No ; I'm the least.

VITT. Oh, let us all be Kings !

GIUS. Until the true King comes.

HERE. The King of Kings !

SIBYL (*shaking her head, and speaking with childish
importance and mystery*).

I knew a King once.

CHILDREN (*eagerly*). Grannie knew a King !

HERE. Tell us, dear Grannie, tell us of thy King !

VITT. Tell us his name !

BRUN. And when he lived !

HERE. And where

[*The SIBYL laughs and looks pleased, but
shakes her head and begins to move
away toward her CAVE. The
CHILDREN cling to her arms, her skirts,
get in her way,—all except GIUS-
TINIANO, who, after a moment of
irresolution, turns on his heel and
goes back to the CITY.*

SPYR. And didst thou serve him, Grannie ?

SIBYL (*chuckling cunningly*). Serve him ?—Rarely !

A MASQUE OF SIBYLS

GIUS. (*standing beside the wall and raising his voice so as to be heard by the other CHILDREN*).

This King will measure off the city street.

[*The CHILDREN half turn toward GIUSTINIANO, but still move with the SIBYL.*]

HERE. Presently we will come.

GIUS.

And Vittorino,

Lend me thy sword, to make a little furrow

Crosswise, the way the road shall run.

VITT. (*drawing his sword from his belt*).

Why gladly!

SPYR. Oh, let me take the sword to him! I love

To handle swords!

[*He takes the sword from VITTORINO and runs with it to GIUSTINIANO.*]

GIUS.

And we must have pure gold

To pave the city street.

SPYR.

I'll get it!—Where?

HERE. (*still holding the SIBYL's sleeve*).

The sand! The golden sea-sand, on the shore!

SIBYL (*with a wailing cry*).

As many years of life as grains of sand!

SPYR. But how to bring it up the hill?

CORN.

Take this!

[*She strips off her gay little apron.*]

HERE. Thou'lt wait for Grannie's story?

SPYR.

Could I listen?

If night should come? Or if the sudden sea
Should rise, and all our sand be washed away?
Theodoric! Theodoric! Come down!

Where is the sand most golden on the shore?

THEO. (*jumping to his feet and coming down the hill, his little, unfinished boat in his hands*).

I'll show thee! Wait for me!—I know a place,—
A little scalloped cove where weedy creatures
Trail in and out, wish-washing on the tide.
And when I come a-sailing in from sea,
With all those tribes and peoples in my ship,
I'll say: "Good citizens, the golden gleam
Is our safe harbour; no more rocks to fear;
Wink back the dazzle!" And I'll beach my prow.

BRUN. What tribes and peoples?

THEO. Out of every nation
I'll gather them.

[MAFALDA, *in her wandering has come near the other CHILDREN. She is stooping to smell a flower, but at the words of THEODORIC she lifts her head.*

MAF. Are they those happy ones
That carry palms a-waving in their hands?
Oh, take me with thee! Let me wave a palm!

SIBYL (*brooding*).

I writ the prophecies on leaves of palm.

ION (*ignoring the SIBYL and speaking to THEODORIC*).

Are they that multitude no man can number,
 Nellina said shall come?—A name, she said,—
 Out of the great—the great—?

AESK.

Great Tribulation.

FEL. I do not know that country.

THEO.

I shall know it.

SIBYL (*turning upon the LITTLE GIRLS, who have
 been gently urging her to sit down on a broken
 capital at the mouth of her CAVE*).

Where are my prophecies,—my nine great books?

BRUN. What books?—Nellina has the only Book.

SIBYL (*fiercely excited*).

Not one, but nine!—Or were there only six?—

Or three?—Go fetch them hither! Let me count!

[*In weary confusion she sits down at the
 mouth of the CAVE.*]

COR. (*hovering over her and explaining tenderly*).

Presently, our Nellina will come back.

AGL. There is an idle Harper hereabout

Who mocks us, breaking down our city wall.

BRUN. Pretending, but to tease us, that the stones
 Are his we build with.

COR.

And he laughs at us.

And our Nellina went away with him,

Up to the hill-top, that we might have peace.

THEO. (*earnestly to the SIBYL*).

And if thou look, and look, thou seest, sudden,
The world and all its kingdoms from that hill-top.

SPYR. (*roused by the voice of THEODORIC*).

The sand!—The city!—Come, Theodoric!

[SPYRIDION and THEODORIC run off
together, waving and twisting
CORNELIA'S apron between them.

SIBYL (*considering the words of THEODORIC*).

Not Rome!—It is a weary way to Rome,
Where Tarquin dwells.

HERE. The King?

BRUN. But Rome has vanished.

HERE. Hush! Listen!

ION. Tell us, Grannie!

CHILDREN (*admonishing one another*).

Hush! The story!

[MAFALDA loiters toward the CITY,
where GIUSTINIANO is, with de-
liberation and careful measurement,
marking off the street in the shape of a
cross. He uses VITTORINO'S sword to
make a furrow, and constantly verifies
his lines with the reed. AGLAIA,
BRUNHILDA, CORNELIA, FELICE,
AESKLEPIOS, ION, VITTORINO, HERE-
WARD, sit down on the ground in a
semi-circle before the SIBYL.

SIBYL (*rocking back and forth and speaking in a chanting sing-song, her long arms clasped around her knees*).

Now hush ye, list ! and I will tell
Of Rome, an ancient, by-gone city ;
And Tarquin that was hight the Proud,
A mighty King,—and knew no pity.

CHILDREN. O Grannie, 'tis a mournful ditty !

ION. How should a King be proud ?

SIBYL. There was a woman came from Greece ;
Virgin was she for a vow.
Young Phœbus was her false lover ;
Where Cumæ was she dwelleth now.

CHILDREN. O Grannie, Grannie, was it thou ?

HERE. False was never a lover !

SIBYL. Young Phœbus whispered in her ear ;
Her heart within her breast did quake.
He laid his hand on her fair hand ;
She wrote the words young Phœbus spake.

CHILDREN. O Grannie, what were the words she spake ?
How may we understand ?

SIBYL. Once, twice, the Ides of March did pass ;
She did not stint, she did not stay ;
She rested not for bite nor sup.—
That ladye wrote a year and a day.

CHILDREN. The words, the words, dear Grannie, pray!

SIBYL. Hark ye, I burned them up!

So many words that virgin writ,
They covered the leaves of a tall palm tree.
And she sifted the leaves, and she sorted the leaves,
And she fashionèd books of them, three times three.

ION. Nine books!—and lost to you and me.

CHILDREN. Alas! dead words!—dead leaves!

SIBYL. King Tarquin sat at meat in hall,
And his lordings kept him companye.
There came a knocking at the gate.
“Tilly vally, who may this be?”

CHILDREN. O ho! we know! 'tis plain to see!
Grannie knocked at the gate.

SIBYL. “What's that beneath thy cloak, good mother?
What dost thou hide so secretly?”
“Oh, these are my nine little sons and daughters,
Born with a gift of prophecy.”

AESK. O Grannie, spare them, woe is me!
Dead little sons and daughters!

SIBYL. “Now prythee name their father's name:
Is he a lord of high degree?”
“Tarquin the Proud shall be his name,—
An thou wilt pay me royally.”

FEL. To sell thine own to slavery!

CHILDREN (*pointing at her*).

Shame! Shame! Shame!

SIBYL. "Give me my price, thou King of Rome!

And time to come shall be now and here."

"Good mother, prythee name thy price."

"Bend down and I'll tell it in thine ear."

CHILDREN. O Grannie, Grannie, greedy, I fear!

FEL. Why shouldst thou ask a price?

SIBYL. "Give me my price, thou King of Rome,

And Rome shall live forever and aye."

"Too much, too much, thou silly old woman.

The half were twice too much to pay."

CHILDREN. O Tarquin, buy them!—Woe the day!

Cruel, cruel old woman!

SIBYL. Now she hath hied her home again,

To Cumæ Cave where the cold wind moans;

And she hath built her a little fire

To warm her chilly bones.

CHILDREN. O Grannie, never heed thy bones

CORN. (*weeping*). Tears shall quench the fire!

SIBYL. Three times upleapt the crackling flame;

Three times it dwindled and it dwined;

Three times the gray and ghostly ashes

Were scattered on the wailing wind

ION. May dead words leave their souls behind?

AGL. See! in her hair! the ashes!

SIBYL. King Tarquin sat at meat in hall,
The mirth was loud, the hour was late.
Above the laughter and the din
There came a knocking at the gate.

VITT. O warder, warder, guard the gate!

CHILDREN. Shall we let Grannie in!

SIBYL. Come buy my ballads, come buy my riddles,
Come buy great Rome's true history!
Come buy my six little sons and daughters,
Born with a gift of prophecy!

BRUN. O Grannie, where are those other three?

AESK. Dead little sons and daughters!

SIBYL. "Now prythee, peddler, name thy price;
Good cheap for six, my honest dame."
"Good cheap for nine is good cheap for six:
My price is ever the same."

FEL. Good cheap were dear for thy good name.

Were they thine to sell, the six?

SIBYL. Now who so wroth as proud King Tarquin?
He sware by the seven hills of Rome,
The six may burn or ever he buy them.
Anon he sware by Peter's dome.

CHILDREN. O greedy Grannie, get thee home !
AESK. Alackaday, she'll burn them !

SIBYL. The night is dark on Cumæ cliff;
The small stars flicker windily,
The Sibyl of Cumæ is lighting her candles :
“Gramerci, let them burn !” quoth she.

CHILDREN. Count the candles ! One, two, three !
HERE. O wind, blow out the candles !

SIBYL. King Tarquin sat at meat in hall,
And who so sad and sour as he.
“There's one doth wait without the gate.”
“Go bring her hither hastily !”

VITT. O Grannie, peace 'twixt him and thee !
Peace, ere it be too late !

SIBYL. “Open thy pack, thou jolly pedlar ;
Thy fallals and fairings I fain would see !
“Shall I sell my three little sons and daughters ;
—All that are left to comfort me ?”

VITT. and FEL. (*together*). He that loveth his own
countree,
Giveth his sons and his daughters.

SIBYL. The King hath ta'en her by her cloak :
“Thy price, thy price, thy price, good mother !”

“Three times three is the price of three :
One price,—I’ll have none other.”

FEL. Little children, love one another !

What matters nine or three ?

SIBYL. Now loudly doth King Tarquin sigh,
And loudly doth King Tarquin groan ;
But he hath called for his fat purse,
And he hath made the three his own.

CHILDREN. How may he know they are his own ?

FEL. Doth magic dwell in a purse ?

SIBYL. And he hath lodged them in his keep,
High on a hill in that fair city.
All Rome doth hearken when they speak ;
They are so wise,—they are so witty.

BRUN. But Rome hath vanished,—more’s the pity.

ION and HERE. Would I might hear them speak !

SIBYL. Love and wisdom and gold are fled ;
Slowly the long gray years creep by.
On Cumæ cliff an old, old woman
Doth drowse, and drone, and sigh.

Phœbus Apollo, let me die !

Such an old, old, old, old woman !

*[For a little space there is silence. The
CHILDREN sit staring with startled,
uncomprehending eyes at the SIBYL,*

who has dropped her head on her knees. Presently, BRUNHILDA speaks in a tone that is half question.

BRUN. But if thy name, thy new and secret name,
Is written in the Book of Life?

SIBYL. Apollo!

Release me! For the sake of our dead love
We slew,—O god who loved me, slay me now!

HERE. Love is another deathless one. But love
That dies, or love that's false?—How is that love?
[*The CHILDREN all crowd more closely
around the SIBYL and begin to ask
questions.*

ION. And why was proud King Tarquin proud?

AESK. And why

Didst thou burn up the books?

SIBYL (*looking from one to another in dull helplessness and bewilderment*), I have forgot.

FEL. Why didst thou sell the books?

SIBYL. I have forgot.

FEL. If they were thine, what need to ask a price?

Why is mine mine but for the joy of giving?

What joy was hid for thee within the price

Proud Tarquin grudged to pay?

SIBYL. I have forgot.

BRUN. (*brooding*).

Is it that former things have passed away?

SIBYL (*looking around in a daze*).

I have lost something,—

[*She gets up, totters to the mouth of the
CAVE and clutches in futile fashion
at the dancing leaves.*

Who hath left my door

Ajar?

[*She turns fiercely upon the CHILDREN.*

Ye cursed meddling brats!—Begone!

[*The CHILDREN draw back in fright and
stand wide-eyed, silent. After a
moment CORNELIA speaks in a timid
voice.*

COR. God bless thee, Grannie!

HERE. Bless thee, Grannie dear!

CHILDREN. God bless, bless, bless thee!

VITT. (*boldly*). I shall kiss thee, Grannie!

[VITTORINO *puts his arms up, clasps the
SIBYL around the neck and kisses
her wrinkled cheek.*

SIBYL (*looking dazedly at VITTORINO and then at
the other CHILDREN*).

I have lost something.

HERE. Eyes that see,—bright eyes

Shall find it for thee, Grannie, do not grieve.

BRUN. I think it is a riddle, Hereward.

I think the former things are passed away,
And she has lost the reason why they were.

VITT. The reason why she quarrelled with the King?

FEL. The greedy reason why she set a price

Upon the books she might have shared with him?

ION. Is it that love was dead? Is that the riddle?

HERE. It was not love that died. It was not love.

AESK. Asleep?—in prison?

[*The CHILDREN shake their heads perplexedly and think hard. The SIBYL has once more sunk on the stone.*]

ION. How shall former things

Be gone,—and Grannie's here?

SIBYL. I am not here!

I am not here! Not here! This is not I,—

This withered grasshopper that feebly skips

Askew before the wind, and chirps a thin

Dry chirp. Oh, hast thou heard the prophetess

Singing of fate within her thundery cavern?

Oh, hast thou seen those startled locks, alive,

Upris'n, above those wild, entrancèd eyes?

Oh, hast thou seen that mad, mad mouth the god

Did kiss?—No, no, I am not here!—Not now!

HERE. (*who has gone to the mouth of the CAVE and is peering in*).

A prophetess?—And will she sing for us?

[*He calls softly.*]

Lady, come forth!

SIBYL (*lifting her head*). Who seeks the oracle?

HERE. (*still with his head in the CAVE*).

Lady, sing of the city that shall be!

SIBYL (*rising in shaky majesty*).

Approach!—Who calls?—Aeneas, is it thou?

HERE. (*coming out of the CAVE surprised*).

Art thou that prophetess?

SIBYL. I am.—I was.—

Methought I was.—It may be—I forget.

BRUN. 'Tis very simple:—wilt thou know thyself

A prophetess, needs but thou prophesy.

HERE. O Grannie, do it now!

VITT. We all say please!

[GIUSTINIANO *has for several minutes paused in his work, kneeling upright, listening, his reed balanced on his hand. Now he calls across from the CITY.*

GIUS. Tell us the King's name, Grannie; not thy King

But ours. And tell how soon we shall be living

Within our city gates.

CHILDREN. How soon? How soon?

Prophesy of the city! Prophesy!

SIBYL (*laughing wildly*).

O Rome! O Ingrate! is it thou or Echo

Repeats thy lordly, loud imperative?

Where dost thou hide thee, Latium?—where,
thou wraith

Of Ilium, thou shadow of a shadow?

What threats thee, superstitious whimperer?

Art hungry? There was grain at Cumæ once

When Latium lacked.—O Cumæ, stripped and
ravaged

To fill the bellies of unthankful Romans!

[She stares mournfully about her at the ruins.]

COR. We are not hungry; we have bread a-plenty.

HERE. The Bread of Life.

BRUN. 'Tis Rome; 'tis always Rome,
She sees and hears.

HERE. O Grannie, leave what was!
What shall be lingers on thy heralding.

CHILDREN. Prophecy!

SIBYL. Peace, O Rome!—Importunate!

Make friends with Mother Ceres; build a house
To Mercury, the god of chafferers.

Sacrifice to the sea-god, set him up

His altar side by side with Father Tiber.—

Not famine?—Is it pestilence doth fright thee?

Art thou come down to Cumæ to be healed?

Call the physician!—Ho!—Apollo!—Healer!

Yonder's the hospital,—go seek for him

Among his ruins! Call him yet again;

Mayhap he's stricken with infirmity.—

Mayhap he's deaf ;—the aged oft are deaf.

Good doctor !—Rome is ailing ! Phœbus !—
Deaf !

Apollo heareth not the Sibyl's voice !

Oh, deaf indeed !—the hopeless, creeping
silence !—

Nay, I forget ;—'tis I that cannot hear.

*[She falls to muttering, voicelessly, staring
about on the ground and shaking her
head.]*

VITT. (*addressing the other CHILDREN*).

If all together with one voice we shouted !

[And now, while the SIBYL is thus distraught and the CHILDREN stand by, watching, the voice of APOLLO is heard singing. And presently, while he still sings, APOLLO and EMMANUELA appear a little way up among the ruins, and come slowly down the hill as far as the jutting boulder where THEODORIC sat. APOLLO is luminous and splendid as a maple tree in autumn, in his ragged scarlet clothes. His bright hair lifts up about his head wavily, like thistle-down. On his lips, as he sings, flickers a mysterious smile. His eyes

burn upon his beloved. EMMANUELA is the eldest of all the CHILDREN, a young and slender girl with visionary eyes, and a face fearless and innocent. In her hand she brings the BOOK. As she comes down the hill she turns her head to look at the CHILDREN, and she greets them with pretty, beckoning gestures of love. But at the sound of APOLLO'S voice the CHILDREN have all stuffed their fingers in their ears. They smile up at EMMANUELA and shake their heads in disapproval.

APOL. (*singing to the music of his harp*).

Lo, my little loom of song!

Singing woof of words and warp

Of humming strings across the harp.

Lo, the web I weave!

Hear the harper wind the words along

The strings,

As he strums and sings!

Listen, O Beloved, listen! leave

Longing after childish things

And wear the gift the weaver brings:

The wooing web, the lilting veil.

Dearest, hear the harper crying, "Hail!"

EMM. I cannot hear thee, minstrel; art thou singing?
I hear the harpers harping with their harps
Before the throne of God.

APOL. (*in anger*). I shall prevail!

SIBYL (*again speaking aloud, but in a dull, level voice*).

I cannot hear the tramping of thy legions
Along thy Romeward roads, O haughty City!
I cannot hear the shouting of thy people,
Come out to greet thy conquering generals.
The roars and gnashings of bewildered beasts,
The chained clanking of barbarian captives,
The rumble of the chariots in the Triumph,
Smother upon the threshold of mine ear.
The dubious stillness hath infected me
With doubtings,—me, the prophetess—the Sibyl!
No Triumph!—Nay, as wise to cry no Rome,
Or no eternity,—Rome is her triumph,—
The city called Eternal.

BRUN. Rome eternal?

But where is Rome?

SIBYL. Why, where but everywhere!
Gaul, Carthage, what are these but other names
For Rome? She hath a bed in drowsy Egypt,
Yet doth she rise ere sun-up far in Britain
To tame the Picts and Scots; and prompt at noon
Thou'lt find her crucifying malefactors
Obscurely in Judæa. Yet, all the while

Upon her seven hills she sits at ease
And through her gates the conquered Kings
come in.

HERE. She prophesieth!—And the Kings of earth
Do bring their glory and their honour in,—
The glory and the honour of the nations!
The Word! The Book's true word!—at last!
at last!

She prophesieth !

SIBYL. Everywhere !—And yet
I cannot find her. She hath hid her glories
From only me. From me that decked her in them.
Her glories?—Mine !—Yea, every one was mine.
Through me came commerce, traffic over sea,
Empire !—Through me, religion and the rites
The gods have hallowed : festivals, processions,
And consultations of the oracle.
Through me came letters: Cæsar had not penned
His commentaries had not infant Rome
Scribbled her first Cumæan A B C
At my dame school. O thankless, graceless scholar,
Wilt thou forsake me ? Aye, she hath shook off
The Sibyl from her skirts. Apollo, curse her !
O Delian, dost thou patiently endure
To see thy prophetess, thy chosen vessel,
Cast careless out among the broken shards ?
If age hath cracked me, thou didst make me aged.

Mercy! Apollo!—Nay, he too is gone.
She called him. Rome hath gathered all the gods
Into her wanton lap, and cozeneth them,
The old gods and the new. And temples crumble
At Cumæ. None comes hither any more,
Seeking the oracle with gifts and homage.
Nor god nor suppliant is at Cumæ now;
Only the empty mouthpiece of the god
Expectant gapes; and faint, and yet more faint,
A witless echo, wandering in the cavern,
Cries “Prophesy!”

[*During the raving of the SIBYL the CHILDREN have slipped away one by one until only HEReward and BRUNHILDA are left contemplating the old woman. AGLAIA and VITTORINO go back to their work on the wall; FELICE retires to his heap of stones where he becomes very busy. ION, beckoned by GIUSTINIANO, assists in laying out the CITY street; CORNELIA, when APOLLO appears among the ruins, flees to her dolls, clasps them to her breast and brings them down near FELICE and his storehouse. EMMANUELA is sitting on the great boulder, looking*

dreamily out to sea; a little below her, kneeling beside his small harp, APOLLO woos her. Ever and again amid the cries of the SIBYL the harp is heard, a faint chord that dies away. When the SIBYL apostrophizes the god, APOLLO turns his head, glances carelessly down over his shoulder, still strumming his harp, and presently turns again to EMMANUELA. AESKLEPIOS slowly makes his way up among the rocks and leans at last against EMMANUELA'S knee, gazing now at her now at APOLLO, and putting out a little, gentle, warding hand when the god leans too near.

APOL.

He dwelleth near at hand?

Send thither one of these tormenting chicks
And bid him to thee. Let him make a music
More magical than mine, and I will call him
Master, and break my harp, and hush my song.
But thou must hear within his golden voice
The sound of sunbeams singing *io pæan*,
And thou must hear the vibrant skies cry out
Their thrillèd harmonies whenas he plucketh
His harp. And in his piping thou must hear

The dawn-song whispering, the humming song
Of shadowless high noon, the lullabye
Of crooning twilight.

EMM. Yea; and yet another,
A new song, I must hear, a song the harpers
In heaven sing. It soundeth as the voice
Of many waters, as the mighty voice
Of thunder. 'Tis a song no man may learn
Except he be redeemèd from the earth.
Canst sing it?

APOL. Is he man or god, thy minstrel?
There was a man named Marsyas, could pipe;
But he is dead. Mayhap 'tis Pan doth lure thee.
Ah, no; thine innocent, unshadowed eyes
Have never looked on Pan. Some wanton shepherd
Wooeth thee. Bid him bring his harp, his pipe,
Whatso he will. And he shall play to thee,
And sing. And after, I;—and thou shalt choose.

EMM. Nay, Harper; I have chosen.

APOL. Dost believe
My harp is all my Kingdom? Dost believe
His golden promises?—I'll overmatch them.

EMM. Verily, golden are they: when his glory
Is ris'n upon me I shall shine.

APOL. His glory?

Thou knowest?—Who is he, this King of Glory?

EMM. My Lord, my Light.

APOL. O Love, who is that light?

EMM. The True Light, Harper; Light of Light,
in whom

Is Life.

APOL. Thou knowest! Thou hast caught the gleam
Beneath these rags? And wilt thou mock thy
Light,

Thou fairest, wisest, youngest of the Sibyls?
Mine! Mine!

*[He springs to embrace her, but she has
risen, and before her stands little
AESKLEPIOS with protecting arms
spread wide.]*

SIBYL *(lifting her head from her knees)*.

The dream of wooing;—the old dream.

EMM. Embers, that glow and throb and faintly sparkle;
Red embers, dying, ashy at the edges,
I see. The sunset's wintry afterglow
I see. But he is light.

APOL. Yea; light am I.

EMM. Light of the world?

APOL. I am the very sun!

EMM. Of righteousness?

APOL. I am the child of Zeus;
I am a god.

EMM. He is the light that shineth
In darkness.—But thou comprehendest not.

APOL. (*laughing into her eyes*).

If I, the sun-god, am not light, I'm nothing.

EMM. Nothing.

APOL. And wilt thou say it is not I
That quickeneth the earth? It is not I
That bringeth to the birth the fruitful clouds?
That openeth the else unseeing eyes
Of all the world?

EMM. Not thou!

APOL. Emmanuela,
Dost doubt thine own divining? Who am I?
O Priestess veiled in playful mysteries,
Have pity! Cease thy Sibylline sweet mocking.
Wilt thou that I do off this minstrel guise,
And shine, and prove me very god? What wilt
thou?

The glory of the world is mine to give.—
Nay; shrink not, fear not; see! these hands
are empty.

They bring no jewelled burden for thy brow.
'Tis thou shalt give, my little guileless heart,
And I will build a temple here to shelter
The precious gift. And lovers shall forsake
Eros and Cythera, and hither come
To worship a new goddess. Lo, Belovèd,
My empty hands!—And thou canst fill them.—
Give!

[He strikes his harp. His fingers and his voice together weave a rhythmic, chanting song, tense and impelling. At the sound of his singing the SIBYL begins to grope slowly, blindly, up the rocks toward him. CORNELIA, BRUNHILDA, and little MAFALDA draw near and stand close together, gravely listening. AGLAIA, who has been busy with her pattern, waits idle on her knees by the wall, her head turned to hearken. HERWARD sits by the SIBYL'S CAVE, his fingers thrust in his ears, frowning disapproval. As the song continues, AESKLEPIOS tugs at EMMANUELA'S skirt, and she, sinking again upon the rock, gathers the child into her lap and sits motionless, looking out over the sea.]

APOL. I have dreamed me a dream of dead altars
agleam and aglow

With the quickening fires of sacrifice : slow,
the soft purling

Blue fragrance of incense comes curling

Up, up, from below.

And I breathe! Oh, the blessing of breath to
the death-haunted god

In his vacuous godhead imprisoned ! No longer
I nod,

No longer I pale

In a stale drowsy smother : I breathe ! I inhale
The aroma of worship and prayer that availeth
for life

In the rare, thin, deific, Olympian air.

I have dreamed me a virginal dream of the
mystical strife,

The immortal despair

I must suffer, and thou, ere mine altars shall
smoke, and my light

Shall illumine my priestess. O Love, I have
dreamed of a wooing

Idyllic, a flight,

And thou fleeing from me, the pursuing.

I have seen in a vision my desolate hill-tops a-flower
With temples, white blossoms Elysian, upspring-
ing to bloom

On the blight that consumeth ; defying, denying
the doom

And the dying they live by. Again is my
radiant hour

Arisen to shatter the gloom.

I have heard the strong voices of song-singing
multitudes lifted

Exultant to welcome the home-coming god, and
the gifted

Of God, the one wise one, the pure one, the
Priestess with power

To set the dim Prisoner free.

I have heard

In the echoing groves a new word ;

On the lips of the people thy life-brimming name ;

Yea ; for thee

The acclaim, O my Sibyl, Deliverer !—Impotent I,

If my Priestess deny me the flame.

And thrice impotent ye,

O bereft ! sending up the dark sky

Your faint cry.

All that I ask of thee, Love, is thy leave

To uplift thee above the crass ills other mortals
must suffer,

Above the gray fears that harass them, the
sorrows that grieve,

The calamitous torments that writhe in their
rougher

Inferior, obstinate clay.

Pains for the human ! But thou shalt be one
with thy god

In his heavenly heyday of play.

Stains for the earth-tainted clod,

But for thee the bright vesture sun-woven,
immaculate, fair,

The Deathless Ones wear.

Passion of pleasure and passion of power
fulfilled for thee,

Sacrifice spilled for thee,

Hunger and anger and agony stilled for
thee,

A new world willed for thee,—

God on his knees, even he, humbly worshipping
thee!

Speak!—Shall it be?

SIBYL (*still groping upward*).

A little louder, Sweetheart!—Where?—So dark!

EMM. He is his own high priest. Captivity

He hath led captive. He received not honour

From men; nor did he claim immunity

From human pains. His garment was our flesh.

I have his promise he will lift me up

Beside him, high, rejected,—on a cross.

[AGLAIA comes running to join her sisters
and the four LITTLE GIRLS embrace
one another, laughing joyously.]

LITTLE GIRLS. And she shall sit beside him in
his throne!

[*They fling themselves upon EMMANUELA*

with kisses and laughter, and she returns their caresses tenderly, holding them close. SPYRIDION and THEODORIC enter walking very slowly. They carry a stout stick between them, on which is swaying the knotted bundle of sand. They take one slow step at a time, watching the swinging bundle and gripping the ends of the stick very tight.

APOL. A little mad thou art, I know, Beloved,
 Being a Sibyl. Let me cleave the chaos
 With light, and sift the 'wildered prophecies!
 Come up the hill again, Emmanuela,
 And leave these noisy youngsters to their play.

LITTLE GIRLS. No, no!

EMM. They need me here; I have no time
 To loiter longer, Harper, listening
 To songs of thine. I cannot leave the children.

APOL. And if I give thee for thy bridal gift
 Time and immortal timelessness?

EMM. He gives
 Eternity.

APOL. Thou shalt companion me
 Throughout my length of days.

SIBYL (*grovelling at the feet of APOLLO and crying out loud and shrill*).

How long! How long!

More days?—Ai! Must I live another day?

APOL. (*thrusting her down the rocks with his foot*).

Loosen thy claws, ungrateful hag! Thou greedy!

Thou wanton!—Off!—I gave thee that I promised;

I paid thee that I owed. Is mine the blame

That thou hast over-reached thyself?

SIBYL (*shrieking her imprecations as she falls down the rocks*).

Betrayer!

Betrayer! Cozener! Betrayer! Cursèd!

[*She topples against SPYRIDION and THEODORIC, who are that moment passing by. The sand is spilt. The CHILDREN come running. There is confusion and excitement.*]

VITT. (*crying aloud in anguish*).

They must not quarrel! No one quarrels now!

Oh, Grannie! Harper! Kiss and make it up!

EMM. (*stooping over the old SIBYL and slipping an arm under her head*).

A little while, a little longer, Grannie,

And it is over.

CHILDREN. Send away the Harper!

Nellina, send him far away!

[*The SIBYL looks dazedly from EMMANUELA to the sand and back again. She*

*sits up and reaches out one bony,
shaking hand and scoops up a hand-
ful of sand and lets it sift through
her fingers.*

SIBYL.

He promised

For every grain of sand a year of life.

He cupped my hands within his own;—he laughed.

“Such little, little hands!” he said,—and laughed.

He kissed my fingers where the sand spilled
through.

And up the gleaming beach blue water curled

And kissed my feet. And all the laughing sea

Was filled with sunlight,—all the blue was golden.

And all the laughing, golden sky was blue.

And I was young.

*[The CHILDREN are busy scooping the sand
into CORNELIA's apron. The SIBYL
looks into the face of EMMANUELA.]*

SIBYL.

I saw each grain of sand

A little casket holding in its heart

Jewels.—But they were dust.—He cheated me.

What hath he promised thee?—Ah, child beware!

*[The CHILDREN have scooped the sand
into the apron. THEODORIC, SPYR-
IDION, GIUSTINIANO, and VITTO-
RINO, take each a corner of the
apron and carry it within the wall]*

*of the CITY. APOLLO has drawn
the unwilling AESKLEPIOS to him and
is whispering in his ear.*

EMM. (*smiling upon the old SIBYL*).

I know him, I am not afraid.

SIBYL. S'sh'sh! Hush!

He'll hear thee, dearie! Think not to outwit
The amorous Apollo.

EMM. (*gently*). I am safe.

SIBYL. Thy wisdom cannot save thee. I was wise.

EMM. I shall be saved by love.

SIBYL. A snare! A snare!

APOL. (*to AESKLEPIOS, coaxingly*).

A little leg as straight and strong and supple
As Vittorino's or Spyridion's.
Go tell her!

AESK. No!

APOL. Aesklepios shall dance,
And run, and climb.

AESK. I do not want to dance.
I do not want to run. I climb as fast
As Grannie climbs.

APOL. A leg without a limp!
One touch, and all the lagging ache is gone.
One touch,—and here's a little wingèd heel.

AESK. Thou canst not.

APOL. Ask Nellina.

AESK.

No!—Ah, no!

[EMMANUELA *has left the SIBYL and drawn near, listening eagerly.*

EMM. (*to AESKLEPIOS*).

My little lame boy running with his brothers!

APOL. For his sake—

EMM. (*reaching out to the child*).

All the pain quite kissed away,

My darling. All the little body whole

And hale and beautiful.

AESK. (*pointing with distaste to APOLLO*).

Like his?

EMM. (*faltering, and passing her hand over her eyes*).

Like his?

[*The CHILDREN wait anxiously, drawing nearer. All the CHILDREN have left their play and are listening with intent, grave eyes.*

EMM. (*her eyes fixed, dazzled, upon APOLLO, her hands outstretched to him*).

O Flesh, delivered from infirmity!

For their sakes? For the children shall I give

My body to be burned?—And is it—Mine?

APOL. One touch, and we have wrought the miracle—

For all the world, Belovèd! Thou and I!

EMM. For all the world! Ah, shall not that content me?

APOL. One touch, and thou art sealed with my perfection;

And these through thee,—the perfect race,—
forever.

EMM. To see my children fair, as thou art fair,—
What lacketh?

[*She moves toward APOLLO as in a dream, and he, cautiously, toward her.*]

AESK. But his hands, his feet,—the scars?
I miss them.

EMM. (*standing still and trembling*).

Scars!—O Vision of Perfection,

Return!—Return!

GIUS. And in his side a wound.

His wounds were five

EMM. O King, in all thy beauty

Come back to me!

[*APOLLO springs toward her.*]

EMM. Not thou!

CHILDREN (*crowding between EMMANUELA and APOLLO*).

Not thou! Not thou!

HERE. Where is thy brambly crown?

EMM. O Love, I failed!

O scarred and suffering Love, I am not worthy;
I failed!

[*She stands despairing, motionless, her hands pressed against her eyes. The CHILDREN cling round her, endeavouring to comfort her.*]

CHILDREN. Not thou!

EMM. O Riddle writ in blood
Athwart the pages of the Book of Life,
I cannot read thee!

SIBYL (*wailing*). Cannot read thee!

EMM. God!

They suffer!—Why?

SIBYL. He hates!

EMM. He loves!

CHILDREN (*pointing at APOLLO*). Not thou!

APOL. Not I? Emmanuela,—dear distracted,—
Not I? That for thy sake, thine only sake,
Would heal these little liars?—Canst thou say
This is not love that moves me?

HERE. — No; not love.

APOL. Wilt thou be led by children?

EMM. Yea; by children.

AESK. (*capering crookedly*).

I limp! I limp!—O King, be thine the glory!

EMM. (*kneeling and gathering the child into her arms*).

Lead me!

[*She looks up at APOLLO.*]

Depart, I cannot understand

The mystery called Life ; but I can choose—
Life !

SIBYL. And to me, O God, give Death, give Death !

[*She clings to the knees of APOLLO.*

Fill full her hands ; heap up the barren grains ;
Cover her fingers ; give it all to her,
And leave me empty.

APOL. (*struggling to free himself from the bony grip
of the SIBYL, and crying out now in appeal
to EMMANUELA, now in menace to the old
woman*).

I am Life !—Then die,
Worm-eaten, thou !—The sun-god I, the spring
And very source of life.—Yea ; will I slay thee
And stamp thee out !

AGL. Nellina come away,
And we will build the wall.

MAF. And thou shalt sit
Beside the little yellow, starry flower
We call the Tree of Life. And there we'll wait :
And presently the King of Kings will come,
And pluck the healing leaves from off the tree,
And heal the nations,—and Aesklepios.

SIBYL. Aye !—pluck the gold-tressed fruitage
from the tree !

Aeneas !—Bring the bough !—The golden bough !

APOL. I heal the nations !—Choke, thou snake !

EMM.

Depart!

Thou dost offend these little ones.

HERE.

O sing!

O sing a triumph!—Bring her in with singing!

[*The CHILDREN circle around EMMANUELA in a weaving ring, moving onward into the cleared space within the wall of the CITY. They step daintily as in a dance. They lift their hands high above their heads. APOLLO, with the old SIBYL tangled about his feet, stands looking after them. And from henceforth the CHILDREN and EMMANUELA seem neither to see nor to hear APOLLO.*]

CHILDREN. To the one that overcometh
I will give a gift of price,
Bought with tears and tribulation,
Death and sacrifice.

MAF. To the one that overcometh,
Manna will I give to eat;
Manna, manna, hidden manna;
Holy food and sweet.

CORN. To the one that overcometh
I will give a crown of life;

BRUN. Power to set free the nations
From their silly strife.

AGL. On a white stone shall be graven
Secretly a name, yet known
To the one that overcometh.

CHILDREN. He shall have the stone.

BRUN. To the one that overcometh
I will give the morning-star.

CORN. I will clothe him in white raiment,

MAF. White as lilies are.

MAF. I will give the fruit that groweth
On the tree in Paradise
To the one that overcometh ;
And it shall suffice.

AGL. I will fashion me a pillar
In the temple, splendidly.

CHILDREN. Lo, the one that overcometh
Shall the pillar be.

I will write God's name upon it,
And the name beloved of them
That are building the fair city,—
New Jerusalem.

*[When the song is ended the CHILDREN
make a place for EMMANUELA*

beside the little yellow flowering bush. SPYRIDION brings a stone for her to sit on. GIUSTINIANO takes the book from her, opens it, and lays it on her knees. All the CHILDREN begin to busy themselves with the affairs of the CITY. AGLAIA, ION, VITTORINO, HEReward, go back to the wall. FELICE and BRUNHILDA choose stones which SPYRIDION carries to the builders. CORNELIA, THEODORIC, GIUSTINIANO, sift the sand very delicately over the street of the CITY. MAFALDA pats the earth around the yellow flower, and brings water in the little wooden cup, to pour upon it. She also cannot resist kissing its leaves. AESKLEPIOS turns the pages of the BOOK for EMMANUELA. APOLLO, with the SIBYL clinging to his knees, drags himself a step or two toward the wall.

MAF. Read of the tree of Life, and of the leaves
That heal; and tell us of the twelve sweet fruits
That hang upon the Tree.

SIBYL (*moaning*). A shady tree,

Hid in a dusky wood, and all its boughs
Are green, but only one,—the golden bough.

CHILDREN (*singing as they build the wall*).

Our Brother is a fruitful vine :

Come rain or shine

No blight doth mar

Our Brother ;—we his branches are.

The grapes we bear shall yield our Father
wine.

APOL. (*taunting the CHILDREN*).

Ye little rascal thieves, what do ye here ?

These are my stones—

EMM. (*lifting her eyes from the BOOK and speaking
to the CHILDREN*).

And came a mighty angel,
Took up a stone like to a great millstone,
And cast it in the sea—

APOL. And mine the temples ;
And yon Acropolis is mine.

EMM. And said,
Lo, thus with violence shall that great city,—

APOL. And mine the city !

EMM. Babylon be thrown

Down, down!—And shall be found no more at all.

CHILDREN (*singing as they work*).

And every branch that beareth not
He spareth not ;

He spurneth it,
And in the fire he burneth it.

But who shall say our Father careth not?

SIBYL. Down, down to Dis! O son of Priam,
hasten!

Yonder I see it gleam!—The bough! The bough!
Proserpina, we bring thee yellow flowers,—
A gift we bring—the key—the golden key!
Unlock the gate of Death!—Unlock the gate!
Unlock—

APOL. (*choking her and trampling upon her*).

Thou empty voice,—I'll still thee!

SIBYL (*strangling*). Gate!—

Aeneas! — Tarquin! — Phœbus! — Death! —
unlock—

[*She sinks into a little dead heap at the
feet of Apollo.*]

CHILDREN (*busy with their building*).

And every branch that beareth not,
He spareth not—

EMM. (*sometimes reading aloud from the Book, some-
times lifting her eyes to speak her message to
the CHILDREN*).

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not
Partakers of her sins!—Alas!—Alas!
That great and evil city, Babylon,
Is fallen! Babylon the great is fallen!

CHILDREN (*chanting*).

He spurneth it,
And in the fire he burneth it.

EMM. The merchants of the earth weep over her,
For no man buyeth of them any more.
The merchandise of gold and precious stones,
Of pearls and purple, and fine flour, and wheat;
The merchandise of chariots and slaves,
And souls of men, that thy soul lusted after,
O Babylon, these are departed from thee!
The merchants stand afar and weep and wail.

CHILDREN (*chanting*).

Our Father can
Grow grapes and wheat,
And souls of men, and bitter-sweet.

APOL. My stones! — my riches! — Mine! —
Emmanuela!

Are not these mine? Emmanuela!—Answer?
Light!—Light!—That I may see my dimming
world!

What time of day?—Methought 'twas noon, and I
Loitering at the zenith. Light!—I stumble!
Light!—And a quiver-full of sun-tipped arrows
To smite this dusk. I say it shall be day!
Emmanuela, listen!—I am singing
My triumph song, and I shall slay again
The snaky darkness. Come, ye Delphian virgins!

Sing for Emmanuela! Celebrate
Anew the death of Pytho; sing the pæan!

EMM. (*absorbed in her book*).

The voice of pipers and of trumpeters,
The voice of harpers shall be heard no more,
No more at all in thee.

APOL. Emmanuela!

Dost thou not hear me?

EMM. And the candle light
Shall shine no more at all in thee.

APOL. Nor see me?

Emmanuela, is my light gone out?

EMM. Thou heaven, rejoice! Ye holy ones, rejoice!
Apostles!—Prophets!—

APOL. Light!—Doth no one hear
Apollo calling?—Am I silence?—I,
That once was music?—Am I night and darkness
That once was day?

EMM. — Rejoice ye over her
For in one hour is she made desolate!

[EMMANUELA rises and stands, rapt, the
Book clasped to her breast.

CHILDREN (*chanting*). Come rain or shine
No blight doth mar
Our Brother; we his branches are.

APOL. (*stooping to lift the SIBYL*).

Old woman, art thou dead?

[He gives her a little shake.

And have I died?

Come, dribble out a word or two,—a curse
To reassure me.—Did Apollo die?

[Loosing the SIBYL, who sinks back at his feet, he turns outstretched arms to EMMANUELA and sings in a faint voice.

APOL. I have heard

In the echoing groves a new word;

On the lips of the people thy life-brimming name;

Yea; for thee

The acclaim, O my Sibyl; Deliverer!—Im-
potent I,

If my Priestess deny me the flame.

I have dreamed me a dream of dead altars
agleam and—

[He stops, continues to stare for a moment at EMMANUELA, then regards his hands, his body, curiously. His gaze comes back at last to the old SIBYL.

APOL. Dead altars,—yea. 'Twould seem the light's
snuffed out.

[He drags up the old SIBYL and flings her over his shoulder. Her ashen, ancient rags flutter about him. Her head and

hands hang down his back. The harp, struck by her swinging hands gives one discordant wail of sound. There is a snapping of strings.

APOL. Swing wide, ye portals of the spell-bound house!

Make room, ye shadows,—for another shadow!

[Carrying the SIBYL, he walks with bent head to the CAVE, pauses a moment on the threshold, looks out upon EMMANUELA and the CHILDREN with grave, set face and brooding eyes, then turns and disappears within the CAVE's darkness. As he vanishes, EMMANUELLA begins to speak.]

EMM. I came to crossways and I laid me down
 And slept. And in my sleep I saw a vision
 Of cities. Lo, a wallèd, waiting town
 Beckoned from every hill mine indecision.
 I heard the voices of the watchmen call
 "All's well!" and knew not whether in derision
 They spake, or soberly. From tower and wall
 Triumphant banners flew, but whether good
 Or whether ill were keeping festival
 I knew not. Whether loving brotherhood
 Or Tyranny exulted, peaceful, smiling,

Within those hospitable gates that stood

Wide, careless open, every one beguiling
The wayfarer,—I dreamed I did not know.

Baffled, I watched the caravans defiling

Along the hilly highways, upward, slow.
Give me a sign!—Ah, which wilt thou condemn,
Thou Judge of cities; which shall be brought
low?

A sign! A sign! that I may flee from them!
A sign! That I may know the New Jerusalem!

How shall I know they do not buy the poor
For silver, yonder; do not falsify
The balances, nor shun the evil-doer?

How shall I know their women do not lie
Upon their ivory beds of soft temptation,
And sup and sleep, and let the hours drift by?

How shall I know thee, O thou righteous nation?
Shall pearls and purple be to me a sign?
The filthy heritors of desolation

Go garmented in purple; yea, their swine
Wallow in pearls.—O City! O thou Bride,
Say “Come!” say “Come!”—and let thy
glory shine!

Christ-Jesus! Bridegroom! Shall I be denied
A place among thy ransomed ones returning
With songs; thy chosen ones that have not died

The second death? And shall my thirsty
yearning
Never be quenched, my children never play
In those bright streets wherein no lamps are
burning?
Shall I sit still in darkness when 'tis day,
Unknowing of the joy that withers not away?

And even as I wept, in sleep I heard
Above the dreaming voice of my lament
The voice of God. Yea; unto me the Word
Came, saying: "Weep not, henceforth: be
content,
For I have given thee a sign.—Behold!"
And lo, a Lamb! white, spotless, innocent,
The Firstling of the flock, a victim sold
For sacrifice—and as it had been slain!
O City of the Lamb, O my Sheepfold,
Jerusalem! wherein is no more pain,
And no more death! O Mystery descending
From God and heaven, I know thee by the stain
Of guiltless blood, and by the never-ending
Triumphant Eucharist whereby thine own,
Thy white-clad citizens, forever bending
In lyric ecstasy before the throne,
Present their bodies and their souls to God
A living sacrifice. Yea; they atone

Through Christ. They bear a cross, their
feet are shod

With peace, and peacefully they tread the way
he trod.

[*During EMMANUELA'S vision, the
CHILDREN have been listening, but
still at their work. When she ceases
to speak there is a brief silence;
then a little humming sound which
presently breaks into song. And as
they build the wall and the CITY, the
CHILDREN sing softly, over and over,
the words which follow.*

CHILDREN. Our Father is a Husbandman :

Our Father can

Grow grapes and wheat

And souls of men, and bitter-sweet.

His harvest field from sky to sky doth span.

Our Brother is a fruitful Vine :

Come rain or shine

No blight doth mar

Our Brother :—we his branches are.

The grapes we bear shall yield our Father wine.

And every branch that beareth not,

He spareth not ;

He spurneth it,
And in the fire he burneth it.
But who shall say our Father careth not?

O Brother Branches, let us bide,
Beatified,
In Christ the Vine;
And bear much fruit, and pour out wine:
For therein is our Father glorified.

THE END OF THE MASQUE

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